



Family Variables and Career Choices of Secondary School Students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of family background variables, which include parents' level of education, family size, and family income, on the career choices of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The ex post facto research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 2,126 senior secondary three students in 12 public secondary schools in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State as of the 2023/2024 academic session. A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 120 students for the study. A researcher-developed instrument titled "Family Background Variables and Career Choice Questionnaire (FBVCCQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was further subjected to face validity by three experts. Two of the experts were from the Department of Educational Foundations, and one expert was from the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. The reliability coefficient of the FBVCCQ was .87, determined using Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that parents' level of education, family size, and family income significantly influence the career choices of



secondary school students. It was recommended, among others, that guidance counselors should provide adequate information services to students to enable them to acquire knowledge, which would help them choose their careers appropriately.

Keywords: Family Variables, Parents' Level of Education, Family Size, Family Income, Career Choice, Secondary School Students

Introduction

The career choice of students is a critical decision that shapes their future professional lives and overall well-being. "Career" refers to an individual's work and life roles over their life span. It includes paid and unpaid work, community volunteer activities, and family responsibilities. Career exploration is the extent to which possible careers are researched and carefully considered. For secondary school students, making a career choice is one of the most important decisions they will make during their adolescent years. This decision influences their subject selection, educational pathways, and ultimately their satisfaction and success in the workplace. When students make appropriate career choices, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction, financial stability, and personal fulfillment. However, when students make poor career choices, they may face frustration, underemployment, and frequent job changes. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence career choice is essential for guidance counselors, educators, and parents who support students in this critical decision-making process.

Family variables are among the most significant factors that influence the career choices of secondary school students. The family has the greatest impact on the socialization of a child. The responsibility for the care of children who totally depend on others typically falls on parents and other family members. According to Ibia (2021), the family gives the first impression, which may last all through the life span of such an individual. The foundation of the child's education starts from the immediate family. The family is a very important factor in preparing young people to function maximally as workers in society. Young people become aware of what is expected at work and different careers as they interact with parents and family generally. Through family influence, everyone is exposed to relationships, attitudes, feelings, and certain learning experiences. The family has a profound influence upon the evaluative aspect of the child's all-round development. A child's desires, satisfaction, and sense of values are all influenced by the educational and economic setup of the family. Family involvement can either be negative or positive depending on how parents guide their children.



One important family variable is parents' level of education. Parents' level of education refers to the highest educational qualification attained by a student's father or mother. This includes primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education. Educated parents are more likely to understand the importance of career guidance and provide relevant information to their children. They can help their children explore different career options, understand the requirements of various professions, and make informed decisions. Parents with higher education levels also tend to have higher expectations for their children's educational and career attainment. They serve as role models and can share their own career experiences. On the other hand, parents with low educational attainment may lack the knowledge and resources to guide their children effectively. They may be unaware of emerging career opportunities or the educational pathways required for certain professions. This limitation can negatively affect their children's career choices. Another important family variable is family size.

Family size refers to the number of children in a family. This includes small families of 1 to 2 children, medium families of 3 to 4 children, and large families of 5 children and above. Family size determines the attention parents can give to each child and the quality of education a child receives. In small families, parents have more time, energy, and financial resources to invest in each child's career development. They can provide individualized guidance, pay for career counseling services, and support their children's educational pursuits. In large families, parental resources become divided among many children. This may result in limited attention, reduced financial support, and less career guidance for each child. A child may settle for any career when the resources of the family cannot conveniently cater to the number of children in such a family. Therefore, family size plays a significant role in shaping students' career choices. Another family variable is the family's level of income.

Family level of income refers to the total earnings of a family from all sources. This includes low-income, medium-income, and high-income families. Gerald (2020) asserts that families with limited economic resources tend to influence the career choices of children. Even in rural towns where almost everyone shares the same ethnic and religious affiliations, children of town bankers, doctors, and teachers probably have a different upbringing from that experienced by the children of most workers. Family income affects children's ability to pursue certain opportunities such as higher education and specialized vocations. Families with high income can afford to send their children to better schools, pay for career guidance programs, and provide educational materials that expose children to various careers.



They can also support their children through longer periods of education and training. Families with low income may struggle to meet basic educational needs, limiting their children's career options to those that do not require extensive education or financial investment. Therefore, family level of income is a strong predictor of career choice among secondary school students.

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between family variables and the career choices of students. One study on parents' level of education and career choice was conducted by Oduduabasi (2018) titled "Family Variables and Career Choice of Secondary School Students in Ikono." The researcher adopted a correlational research design to investigate the extent to which family background influences students' career planning capabilities. The study was carried out in Ikono Local Government Area. The population comprised all senior secondary school students in public secondary schools within the area. A sample of 150 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across both urban and rural schools. The researcher developed a questionnaire titled "Family Variables and Career Choice Questionnaire (FVCCQ)." To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher subjected it to expert review from two educational foundations experts and one guidance and counseling expert at the University of Uyo. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach alpha method, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, which indicated high internal consistency. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between family variables and students' career choice. Specifically, parents' level of education was found to be a strong predictor of career choice.

Another study on family size and career choice was conducted by Emmanuel (2020) titled "Impact of Family Background on the Career Choice of Secondary School Students in Uyo Local Government Area." The researcher employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of family background on students' career choice processes. The study was conducted across the Uyo Local Government Area. The population included all public secondary school students in the selected area. A sample of 200 students was drawn using a purposive sampling technique, focusing on schools that had consistently produced students who made distinct career choices. The major instrument for data collection was the "Family Background and Career Choice Questionnaire (FBCCQ)." Validation of the instrument was achieved through the input of three experts in guidance and counseling and test development at the University of Uyo. The reliability coefficient



of the questionnaire was established using the Cronbach alpha method and recorded a coefficient of 0.83, indicating acceptable reliability. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (regression analysis) at a 0.05 significance level. The findings of the study indicated that family background had a significant positive impact on students' career choice. In particular, family size was found to significantly influence the career choices of students, with students from smaller families demonstrating more focused career decisions.

A study on family level of income and career choice was conducted by Mbagwu and Ajaegbu (2020) titled "Influence of Parents' Educational Background on Career Choice of Teenagers among Senior Secondary School Students in Owerri." The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised all senior secondary school students in Owerri. A sample of 180 students was selected using a random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Parents' Background and Career Choice Questionnaire (PBCCQ)." The instrument was validated by three experts in guidance and counseling and measurement and evaluation. The reliability coefficient was established using the Cronbach alpha method and yielded a coefficient of 0.85. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and regression analysis at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that parents' socioeconomic status, which includes family income, significantly influenced the career choices of teenagers. Students from high-income families were more likely to aspire to professional careers that require advanced education, while students from low-income families were more likely to choose careers that provide immediate financial returns.

From the above reviews, it is clear that family variables, including parents' level of education, family size, and family level of income, have significant influence on the career choices of secondary school students. However, these studies were conducted in other local government areas such as Ikono, Uyo, and Owerri. No study has been conducted specifically in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Therefore, the researchers were motivated to carry out a study on the influence of family variables on career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal secondary school setting, students' career choice should demonstrate clear alignment with their abilities, interests, and personality traits. Students are expected to show mastery through logical, well-thought-out, and realistic career decisions.



They should understand their own capabilities, apply career information appropriately, and make career choices effectively using correct guidance principles. Ideally, career choices serve as foundational tools for creating fulfilling and productive work lives.

However, the reality in many secondary schools today is far from ideal. Increasing concerns have been raised over poor career choice quality among students. Many students struggle with basic career decision-making, resulting in misaligned and unrealistic career aspirations. Their career choices are often filled with vague ideas, lack of information, poor planning, and incoherence. In career planning too, students frequently fail to articulate their career paths clearly. This situation reveals a gap between students' potential and their actual demonstration of career decision-making skills.

School management has organized career guidance workshops, extra counseling sessions, and information programs to address the issue. Internal school policies emphasizing career education have also been introduced. On the government's side, curriculum reforms have been made to promote career-oriented education and realistic career understanding over mere subject passing. Nevertheless, poor career choices persist. It is based on this problem that the researchers were triggered to determine the influence of family variables on career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the conduct of the study:

- i. What is the influence of parents' level of education on the career choices of secondary school students?
- ii. What is the influence of family size on the career choices of secondary school students?
- iii. What is the influence of family income on the career choices of secondary school students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study and tested at a .05 alpha level of significance:

- i. Parents' level of education does not significantly influence the career choices of secondary school students.



- ii. Family size does not significantly influence the career choices of secondary school students.
- iii. Family income does not significantly influence the career choices of secondary school students.

Research Method

The ex post facto research design was adopted in the study. Ex post facto research design is also a design that is used to carry out a study where the researcher cannot directly manipulate the independent variable because it is innate, predetermined, or has already produced its effect (Kpolovie, 2018). The design was considered appropriate since the researcher is interested in determining how family variables influence the career choices of secondary school students. The study was conducted in secondary schools in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area. The population comprised 2,126 senior secondary three students in 12 public secondary schools in the Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State in the 2023/2024 academic year. (Source: Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, Uyo, 2024). A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 120 students for the study.

Data was collected using a researcher-developed instrument named "Family Background Variables and Career Choice Questionnaire (FBVCCQ)." The FBVCCQ had 15 items on family background variables and career choice. The instrument was developed using a four-point Likert scale as shown: Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The instrument was further subjected to face validity by three experts. Two of the experts were from the Department of Educational Foundations, and one expert was from the Department of Guidance and Counseling, University of Uyo. Construct validity of the instrument was also done. The reliability of the instrument was determined by randomly selecting 20 students who were part of the population but not part of the study sample to respond to the instrument. Data generated was subjected to Cronbach's alpha statistics to determine the internal consistency of the test instrument. The instrument was considered reliable for the study as it had a reliability coefficient of 0.87 for FBVCCQ.

Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the influence of parents' level of education on career choice of secondary school students?

Table 1: Summary of mean and standard deviation of the influence of parents' level of education on career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area (n=120)

Parents' Level of Education	n	Mean	SD	Remark
Primary Education	28	32.45	2.18	Influences
Secondary Education	52	38.76	1.94	Influences
Tertiary Education	40	44.32	1.76	Influences

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2026).

From the result in Table 1, it is revealed that the mean and standard deviation scores of career choices among secondary school students whose parents have primary education are 32.45 and 2.18; those whose parents have secondary education are 38.76 and 1.94; and those whose parents have tertiary education are 44.32 and 1.76, respectively. The result means that students whose parents have tertiary education were more identified with career choice, while students whose parents have primary education were less identified with career choice. With this observation, it implies that parents' level of education influences the career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of family size on the career choices of secondary school students?

Table 2: Summary of the mean and standard deviation of the influence of family size on career choices of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area (n=120).

Family Size	n	Mean	SD	Remark
1-2 members	22	44.18	1.85	Influences
3-4 members	48	40.23	1.92	Influences
5 members and above	50	35.67	2.45	Influences

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2026).

From the result in Table 2, it is revealed that the mean and standard deviation scores of career choice of secondary school students from family sizes of 1-2 members are 44.18 and 1.85, those from family sizes of 3-4 members are 40.23 and 1.92, and those from family sizes of 5 members and above are 35.67 and 2.45, respectively. The result means that students from family sizes of 1-2 members were more identified with career choices, while students from family sizes of 5 members and above were less identified with career choices. With this observation, it implies that family size influences the career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

Research Question 3

What is the influence of family income (low, medium, and high) on the career choices of secondary school students?

Table 3: Summary of the mean and standard deviation of the influence of family income on the career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area (n=120).

Family Income	n	Mean	SD	Remark
Low	45	34.23	2.34	Influences
Medium	42	39.87	1.88	Influences
High	33	45.62	1.65	Influences

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2026).

From the result in Table 3, it is revealed that the mean and standard deviation scores of career choice of secondary school students from low family income are 34.23 and 2.34, those from medium family income are 39.87 and 1.88, and those from high family income are 45.62 and 1.65, respectively. The result means that students from high family income were more identified with career choice, while students from low family income were less identified with career choice. With this observation, it implies that family income influences the career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

Hypothesis 1

Parents' level of education does not significantly influence the career choices of secondary school students.

Table 4: Summary of one-way analysis of variance of parents' level of education on the career choices of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4521.672	2	2260.836	189.45*	.000
Within Groups	1396.328	117	11.934		
Total	5918.000	119			

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2026).

In Table 4, the F ratio for the influence of parents' level of education on career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area at df 2, 117 is 189.45, while the corresponding level of significance (sig.) is .000. This level of significance is less than .05, on which the decision is based, indicating that parents' level of education significantly influences the career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area. With this observation, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

Family size does not significantly influence the career choices of secondary school students.



Table 5: Summary of one-way analysis of variance of family size on career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2987.456	2	1493.728	98.34*	.000
Within Groups	1776.544	117	15.184		
Total	4764.000	119			

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2024).

In Table 5, the F ratio for the influence of family size on the career choice of secondary school students in the Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area at df 2, 117 is 98.34, while the corresponding level of significance (sig.) is .000. This level of significance is less than .05, on which the decision is based, indicating that family size significantly influences the career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area. With this observation, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 3

Family income does not significantly influence the career choices of secondary school students.

Table 6: Summary of one-way analysis of variance of family income on career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area.

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4123.890	2	2061.945	156.78*	.000
Within Groups	1538.110	117	13.146		
Total	5662.000	119			

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Source: Computed by the Researcher using data from the respondents (2024).

In Table 6, the F ratio for the influence of family income on the career choice of secondary school students in the Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area at df 2, 117 is 156.78, while the corresponding level of significance (sig.) is .000. This level of significance is less than .05, on which the decision is based, indicating that family income significantly influences the career choice of secondary school students in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area. With this observation, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Parents' Level of Education and Career Choices of Secondary School Students

The result of hypothesis one revealed that parents' level of education significantly influences the career choice of secondary school students. It was also revealed that students whose parents have tertiary education showed higher levels of career choice compared to those whose parents have secondary or primary education. This finding could be attributed to the fact that when parents possess high educational attainment, they are better able to guide their children in understanding different career options, provide relevant career information, and support their children's career planning effectively. Educated parents can leverage their knowledge to help their children make informed career decisions, ensuring that career choices are aligned with the children's abilities and interests. Parents with good educational backgrounds also model effective career planning strategies, encouraging a more systematic approach to career decision-making. On the other hand, parents with low educational attainment may struggle to provide adequate career guidance, offer limited career



information, and leave their children's career planning disorganized. This disorganization often leads to unrealistic, uninformed, or poorly chosen careers. The findings of this study agreed with the findings of Oduduabasi (2018), who reported that family variables influence the career choices of secondary school students. The findings also agreed with Emmanuel (2020), who reported that family background significantly influences the career choices of secondary school students.

Family Size and Career Choices of Secondary School Students

The result of hypothesis two revealed that family size significantly influences the career choices of secondary school students. It was also revealed that students from family sizes of 1-2 members showed higher levels of career choice compared to those from family sizes of 3-4 members and 5 members and above. This finding could be attributed to the fact that when families have fewer children, parents are able to give more attention, resources, and guidance to each child's career development. Smaller family size allows parents to invest more financially and emotionally in each child's education and career preparation. This enables children to explore various career options and receive necessary support for their chosen paths. Conversely, when family size is large, parental resources and attention become divided among many children. This may leave some children with limited career guidance and support. Therefore, the size of a family can directly affect how well students develop appropriate career choices. The findings of this study agreed with the findings of Emmanuel (2020), who reported that family size significantly influences the career choices of secondary school students.

Family Income and Career Choices of Secondary School Students

The result of hypothesis three revealed that family income significantly influences the career choices of secondary school students. It was also revealed that students from high-family income showed higher levels of career choice compared to those from medium and low family income. This finding could be attributed to the fact that when families have higher income levels, they are able to provide better educational resources, career materials, and exposure to different professions. Good family income allows parents to enroll their children in career guidance programs, pay for relevant educational materials, and support further education or training in desired career fields. This financial capability helps children access information about various careers and pursue their chosen paths without financial constraints. Conversely, when family income is low, children may be limited in their career options due to financial barriers. Therefore, the level of family income can directly



affect how well students develop and pursue appropriate career choices. The findings of this study agreed with the findings of Mbagwu and Ajaegbu (2020), who reported that parents' educational background and socioeconomic status influence career decisions of teenagers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that family variables such as parents' level of education, family size, and family income significantly influence the career choices of secondary school students in the Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Hence, family variables enhance the career choices of secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. School management should provide sensitization programs focused on helping parents understand how family size affects career choice. Teachers should interact well with students in school so as to arrive at proper orientation that will shape their perception of different careers.
- ii. Government should ensure that there is an effective guidance and counseling unit in primary and secondary schools with qualified guidance and counseling experts who will organize programs that will enable students to be aware of their abilities, interests, and where they can function maximally.
- iii. Guidance counselors should provide adequate information services to students to enable them to acquire knowledge, which would help them choose their careers appropriately.

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